



February 1, 2017

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-17-19

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program Ranking Process

Purpose: Provide guidance on distribution and use of the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking criteria.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2017

Ranking Categories

The FY2017 General Kansas EQIP eligible ranking categories and the levels applications are ranked per category as follows:

- Forestland Health* (Statewide level)
- Grazing Lands Health * (Resource Management Zone [RMZ] level)
- Livestock Waste* (Area level)
- Sedimentation Above Federal Reservoirs* (Limited to watersheds above a federal reservoir) (Statewide level)
- Soil Health * (Area level)
- Tribal (Limited to Tribal land or Tribal members) (Statewide level)
- Water Quality* (Management Unit level)
- Water Quantity* (Area level)
- Wildlife Habitat* (Statewide level)

*Beginning Farmers/Ranchers (BF/R) and Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Ranchers (SDF/R) have the option to apply under the ranking category specific to their resource concern, or the ranking category for their historically underserved group, but not both.

NOTE: Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers (LRF/R) may only apply under the ranking category specific to their resource concerns. Self-certified Veteran Farmers/Ranchers (VF/R) have the option to apply under the ranking category specific to their resource concerns, or within the BF/R or SDF/R ranking categories, but not both.

Changes to FY2017 Ranking Categories

Forestland Health

- The following practice were added to the eligible practice list, 381–Silvopasture Establishment, 311–Alley Cropping, and 340–Cover Crop.
- Secondary resource concerns are eliminated.
- State ranking question number 5 is revised to provide consideration for Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWP) Ecological Focus Areas.

(more)

DIST: A, F, S

Grazing Lands Health

- Additional ranking requirements are revised for pasture land uses, with a hay land modifier, to be exempt from the boundary fence requirement.
- Ranking priorities are revised to give priority to applications that schedule Conservation Practice (CP) 528–Prescribed Grazing for 3 years of financial assistance.
- State ranking question number 3 is revised to require financial assistance for CP 528–Prescribed Grazing in order to receive ranking consideration for rest achieved under a planned grazing system.
- State ranking question number 6 is revised to remove ranking consideration for contingency ranch/grazing planning criteria and add consideration for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.

Livestock Waste

- Secondary resource concerns are eliminated.
- Additional ranking requirement is revised to **not** allow a financially assisted practice to be initiated on the waste storage facility or associated practices until a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) has been developed. Reference Title 440-Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), EQIP, Part 515, Subpart I, 515.90(C)(4).
- State ranking question number 8 is revised to provide consideration for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.

Sedimentation above Federal Reservoirs

- Secondary resource concerns are eliminated.
- State ranking question number 3 is revised to remove criteria regarding hydrologic unit code (HUC) 8 and HUC 11 and adds criteria for applications located within a watershed as identified in a Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) 9 Element Plan.
- State ranking question number 4 is revised to provide consideration for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.
- State ranking question number 6 is revised to provide consideration for applications located within a Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) identified high priority Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) watershed for siltation.

Soil Health

- Secondary resource concerns are eliminated.
- State ranking question number 5 is revised to provide consideration for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.

Tribal

- Secondary resource concerns are eliminated.
- State ranking question number 3 is revised to provide consideration for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.
- State ranking question number 9 is revised to remove criteria regarding HUC 8 and HUC 11 and adds criteria for applications located within a watershed as identified in a WRAPS 9 Element Plan.

Water Quality

- Secondary resource concerns are eliminated.
- State ranking question number 5 is revised to add criteria regarding KDHE TMDL watersheds for siltation and biological impairments.
- State ranking question number 8 is revised to remove criteria regarding HUC 8 and HUC 11 and adds criteria for applications located within a watershed as identified in a WRAPS 9 Element Plan.
- State ranking question number 11 is revised to provide consideration for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.

Water Quantity

- Additional ranking eligibility requirements for minimum use criteria of 66% and criteria for 5-year average use of 8 inches/acre are removed. Instead, ranking priority is established based on this criteria.
- State ranking question number 8 was revised to include consideration for Water Conservation Areas (WCAs).
- State ranking question number 9 removes criteria regarding funding from other contributors and adds criteria for application water usage.
- State ranking question number 10 removes criteria for application water usage and added criteria for KDWPT Ecological Focus Areas.

Wildlife Habitat

- This ranking category is substantially revised to be in agreement with KDWPT's Kansas Wildlife Action Plan. Incorporated changes include removal of all previous ranking requirement and ranking questions, expansion of primary resource concerns, additional conservation practices, focus on priority landscapes, and the addition of a simplified set of ranking questions.
- Kansas Wildlife Action Plan link:
<http://ksoutdoors.com/content/download/47442/484423/file/Complete%20Plan.pdf>

Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Entry

All applications (pending, eligible, ineligible, or cancelled) will be entered in ProTracts. Eligible applications are those that have an EQIP priority natural resource concern with a planned treatment level that will meet or exceed the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) planning criteria, per Title 440-Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), EQIP, Part 515, Section 515.52(A)(4). Only *eligible* applications will be ranked in ProTracts.

All applications will select "Conventional" for the *Application Type*, with the exception of Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) applications which will select "Planning".

Ranking Applications

- The ProTracts Ranking Tool has four sections: Efficiency, National Priorities, State Issues, and Local Issues.
- The Efficiency section is scored on the Conservation Planning Physical Effects (CPPE) value, practice service life, and practice average cost of planned practices receiving financial assistance.

- National Priorities are scored on whether the application is also addressing EQIP national priorities. Guidance in Kanas Bulletin KS300-17-8– Fiscal Year 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Ranking Process–National Priorities, will assist you in answering these questions.
- State issue questions determine the application’s benefit to state priorities.
- Local issue questions determine the application’s benefit to local work group priorities.

Eligible land uses, state and local issue questions and points assigned, and additional requirements for each ranking category are outlined in Attachments 1 through 9.

Applications will be evaluated by location county. The location county is the county where the land is physically located. If an application is submitted for land located in multiple counties, the county where the majority of the land is located will be considered the location county and entered as such in ProTracts. Supervisory District Conservationists are responsible for ensuring the location county is entered correctly in ProTracts.

Applicants with Previous Cancelled or Terminated Contracts

All state issue ranking questions will be answered “No” for applicants who have cancelled or terminated EQIP contracts in the past. A spot check will be completed by state office staff after contracts have been obligated. Applicants may request a waiver from the State Conservationist. Requests for this type of waiver are not routinely granted. The request will be in writing from the applicant fully explaining the extenuating circumstance(s) that prevented the previous contract completion. Requests will be routed through the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for review and recommendations.

Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI)

Some of the national, state, and local ranking questions for each ranking category require the use of geo-spatial data. The CPGI tool was specifically designed to obtain the needed data for each EQIP ranking category. The tool will be used by all field offices to track location and evaluate all eligible EQIP applications. Only eligible EQIP applications will be entered in the CPGI tool. The application identification number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts. The CPGI is available on field office servers.

Contact: Please forward your feedback and questions through established channels to Joel A. Willhoft, Resource Conservationist, at (785) 624-3127 email joel.willhoft@ks.usda.gov.

(signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments